



# Message **Transcript**

## Why Teach Revelation?

Jeff Schwarzentraub

- Lord Jesus, we give you all the glory, honor, and praise for who you are. Lord, as we open your word, we believe that you have a word for us, and so Lord speak to us today. Lord, help us. Be helpful to me as I teach, be helpful to us as we receive, and Lord help us to do what you would require of us. Lord, we believe every time your word is open, because your word is living and active, because your word is true, because your word will never fade away, that every time we're faithful and proclaiming the word, you speak directly to us. Lord, we believe you have a word for us today. So do your work in our hearts, we pray. And now for all God's people who are listening, who desire to hear what God says, and believe what he says, and receive what he says, and by faith put into practice what he shows you, will you very loudly this morning agree with me by saying the word, amen. Amen.

- Amen.

- Well this morning we're gonna start the book of Revelation. And that has been part of our series called The Alpha and Omega series. We began in the book of Genesis, and took a look at the first 11 chapters, and talked about why it was so important to understand those first 11 chapters in the book of Genesis, and how it set the foundation for God being the creator, and all that he established. And many of the major doctrines that we believe come out of the first 11 chapters in the book of Genesis. Today, we begin to take a look at the end. We started in the beginning, we're taking a look at the end. But the question that we must ask ourselves is why teach Revelation? Why spend time on this book? It's an important question for us to answer because when I say I'm gonna teach the book of revelation, it engenders a response

from everybody in a different kind of way. For some people, they're not very excited about it because they say, "You need like five PhDs to understand it. "I've heard it taught over and over, "and I kind of have an idea what it means, "but if you ask me personally to defend what I believe, "there's no way I could do it. "I mean, I'm just an ordinary person, there's no way." Others don't want to study it because it's confusing. Like how do you really know what all this imagery means, and can anybody even get it right? Other people don't want to study it because they say it causes disunity in the church, because everybody has a different opinion, and there's no way we're ever going to know anyway, it's all just gonna pan out in the end, so why take the time to study this book? I would tell you this, the book of Revelation in studying it sometimes is the most, or one of the most divisive things that we can study in the church. Even when it comes to our understanding of women in ministry, or the fullness of charismatic gifts, the book of Revelation, sometimes people have an understanding of what it is, and if you don't agree with their exact understanding, you know, you're a heretic. So why would we study this? Other people think it's scary. I mean, there's a lot of talk about what's gonna happen at the end with God's holiness and his justice, and what he's going to do to people that don't believe him, and so they're scared to death. Other people just say, "Let me live, I'm young. "I want to grow up and get married, "I want to have a family. "I don't want to hear about all this end time stuff." So I think it's really important that we understand why would we do this? Why do we want to spend time doing this? I want to let you know that when it comes to preaching from this platform that I spend a lot of time seeking the Lord as to what he wants me to teach, and

teaching the book of Revelation for me was something the Lord put on my heart over a year ago. I've been a Christian for 30 years, I've been studying the book over the past year. I've studied it more than I ever have before, and I think it's very timely right now, in God's providential time, that we're teaching this book. I think it's very important for us to understand what this book has to say.

And so today, what I wanted to highlight for you are five reasons why I need to teach the book of Revelation. Five reasons why we as a church need to study the book of Revelation. Because if we can't even agree as to why we need to do this, then why would we spend the coming weeks or months that we're going to spend in this book doing what we're going to do? I think it's important. And isn't it great to know that when God's Holy spirit penned this book, and gave this vision to the apostle John, that he started the book by giving us reasons why we should study it.

So I'm gonna encourage you open your Bible up to Revelation, chapter one. We're gonna take a look at the first eight verses today. This is also my time to tell you, if you do not have a Bible, today is your day, okay. On the way out here in Englewood, we will give you a Bible. This is a book that you want to get your eyes on. This is a book that you want to see for yourself. This is a book that you want to study. This is a book that you want to know, right. So I'm encouraging you, if you don't have a Bible, we'll give you one per, for free. If you want to purchase your own, that's great. I read out of the new American standard Bible if you want to follow along word for word with me, that's what I'm gonna be in. We're gonna go through this entire book, all 22 chapters of this book word by word, verse by verse, thought by thought, for everything

we believe that God wants us to understand. And today we're gonna give five reasons why he wants us to do that.

So open your Bibles to Revelation chapter one, I wanna read the first eight verses, then we'll see if we can unpack those five reasons he gives us. Notice what he says: "The revelation of Jesus Christ, "which God gave him to show his bond servants "the things which must soon take place. "And he sent and communicated it "by his angel to his bondservant, John, "who testified to the word of God "and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, "Even to all that he saw. "Blessed is he who reads, and those who hear "the words of the prophecy, "and heed the things which are written in it, "for the time is near. "John to the seven churches that are in Asia, "grace to you, and peace from him who is, "and who was, and who is to come, "and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, "and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, "the firstborn of the dead, "and the ruler of the Kings of the earth, "to him who loves us and released us "from our sins by his blood. "And he made us to be a kingdom of priests "to his God and father. "To him be the glory and dominion forever and ever amen. "Behold, he is coming with the clouds, "and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, "and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him. "So it has to be, amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord, God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the almighty."

Now in these eight verses, we're gonna see at least five reasons why we should teach the book of Revelation. Five reasons why you should listen to this teaching in the book of Revelation. And the first is this: Why teach the book of Revelation? Well first

and foremost, because it's scripture. And it reveals a greater understanding of Jesus Christ. It's scripture, and it reveals a greater understanding of Jesus Christ. First and foremost, it's scripture. This is the word of God. There are 66 books in our Bible. Revelation is the 66th book in the Bible. This is God's word. God is speaking to us through his word. Anywhere you turn in God's word, God speaks. It's why if you go to a church where the Bible is primary, and somebody is faithful to teach it, you will say things like this from time to time: "That's exactly what I was going through this week. "That's exactly what I needed to hear." Why? Because the word of God is living and active. We're talking about the scriptures. So like any other text in the Bible, I'm gonna teach the scripture because it's the scripture. I've been called of God to preach the word. Here's my ask of you: be humble and teachable as you hear the word of God. Be humble and teachable as you hear the word of God. Listen, I'm called to preach the word, not diagram a chart.

I just want to let you know, I was gonna call somebody up here this morning, but I'll just, I'll save us some time. In this Bible that I'm reading now, this New American, there's no charts in my Bible. I don't have a chart. Many people that studied the book of Revelation start with a chart, and then they're asking the pastor and everybody else, do you agree with this chart? If you start with a chart, you will start looking for things in the scripture to fit your chart. We'll get the charts. But regardless of who you are as a believer, okay, regardless of where you land on some of the things we're gonna talk about, like the timing of the rapture, we're gonna talk about, is it one or two movements, talk about the millennium and how we understand that, regardless of

where you land, 90% of the things in this book, we will agree on as Christians. We'll agree on the picture of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We'll agree on the fact that he loves his church, and wants his church to be righteous and holy. We'll agree on the fact that he has a better understanding of what worship is than what we even see. We'll have an understanding that his judgments are righteous and true. We'll have an understanding that he holds all history together, and will have an understanding that what is to come is better than what we're experiencing now. We're all going to agree on that. Here's the truth about the book of Revelation: I have yet to meet two people in the same camp, that read this book, that agree on everything, okay. I've never agreed with any one person on everything. You're not gonna agree with any one person on everything. It doesn't take away from the theme of the book of what God is saying. So if you're here today because you want to make sure my chart looks like your chart, you're here for the wrong reason. You should be here to hear the word of the Lord, and respond to what he shows you. And I'm asking you to be humble for this reason. If your convictions that you hold are true, they'll only be stronger when we're done with this series, even if you disagree with my interpretation, okay. And if not, and you're humble and teachable, God will show you things. I've been studying this book for a long time and I can tell you, even this week, I'm seeing things I never saw before. And here's why we want to be humble in this book.

If you think back to Jesus Christ's first coming to the planet, who were the most theologically astute and biblically accurate in the scriptures at the time of Jesus? It was the Pharisees. The Pharisees studied the word of God more than anybody. They knew

it backwards and forwards. And yet when the Son of God showed up in full bodily physical form, and stood right in front of 'em, and said, "You diligently study the scriptures because "you think that in them, you have eternal life. "Yet these are the very scriptures that testify about me, "yet you refuse to come to me to have life." What were they saying? What was Jesus telling them? You study the scriptures and you think you're right. You got your charts, you got all that stuff. You don't even know who the one is that wrote it. It's me. Now here's the truth of this book. Someday, for those of us who are believers in the future, we're gonna look back on this book, and we're gonna be like, duh, it was so obvious. I mean, everybody could have seen, I mean it's right here. The word, I mean, but for right now, let's be humble enough to say, especially as we go through this series, "Hey, I'm here to learn." Which means in your small group, I'm not teaching this book so you can debate the timing of the rapture and the second coming, I'm not teaching it for that reason. I'm teaching it because I believe God has some things he wants to say, this is scripture. So we're gonna be humble enough to be taught the word, and receive the word, and grow in the word. As we get further out, I'll chart some things just to bring some clarity to what I'm trying to say. You may disagree with some of those things. I have friends that are in every different camp. I talk to them frequently. They see it differently than I am. They're still Christians. They're not heretics. They're brothers and sisters in Christ. They're just wrong. I mean, so. Okay, good, you're laughing. All right, so that's the point I'm trying to make. And my job as a pastor versus being a seminary professor, is not to teach in such a way that you'd be impressed with me and the charts that I'm making. My job as



a pastor is to teach you the word so you can be ready for all the things that are coming. That's my purpose. So there may be times where I have to share some things that sound a little over your head, that's not my intention, I'm not trying to make myself look smart. My goal is to let you understand who Jesus is better, so you can walk with him, that's my goal. Amen?

- [Congregation] Amen.

- Now notice this, it's scripture. Now what's the first part of the scripture say? It says, "The revelation of Jesus Christ." Now I hear people talk about this book a lot. "I love Revelations, Revelations is my favorite book. "I can't wait to study Revelations." Well, you might want to read the first two words of the book, 'cause there's only one Revelation. It's not plural. It's the revelation of Jesus Christ. This whole book is one revelation. There's no more revelations. There's a lot of things unfolding here, but there's one revelation. We're studying the revelation, that's what we're studying. We're not studying revelations, okay. Now you don't need to put people down when they get it wrong, they're trying. But you go to Brave Church, you want to be accurate with the word. So when you can tell people what are you studying? We're studying the Revelation. We're studying the unfolding of Jesus. And this word revelation is where we get our word apocalypse, apokalyptis. That means it's an unveiling, it's an unfolding. We're gonna see some things that we wouldn't otherwise have seen. And because it's scripture, God is gonna unfold a picture of Jesus that we haven't seen, 'cause who's the revelation of? It's the revelation of Jesus Christ, which means that this text can be taken that this revelation comes from Jesus Christ, and this revelation is

about Jesus Christ. So if you're asking yourself the question, "Why would we study the book of revelation?" Because here's the answer: 'Cause you're gonna learn more about Jesus Christ from this book than you have already learned in the other parts of scripture. Would you like to learn more about Jesus Christ? If the answer's yes, you will enjoy the book of revelation. It's the apocalypse, it's the unveiling, it's the disclosure about more of who Jesus Christ is that hasn't already been revealed. So if you love Jesus and want to know him more, this is the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And notice what he says: "Which God gave him to show his bondservants "the things which must soon take place. "And he sent it and communicated it by his angel "to his bondservant, John." Now twice in that text, you see the word bondservant the Greek word is *doulos*, it means it literally means slave. We don't translate it as slave because of some of the horrible things that have happened, even in our nation. And so we use the word servant, or bondservant. And a bondservant's closer because a bond servant is choosing to be a slave, but here's the truth: we're slaves of the King. Servants get a choice in the matter. What you're gonna see in this book as we unfold it is that Jesus Christ is King, we're his slaves. Jesus Christ is in charge of everything that has happened, is happening, and will happen, we're slaves. We're not telling him what to do, he's telling us what's going on, and how we're called to respond. John is his slave, John is his bondservant. John is the one that's getting the message. And how is he getting the message? Jesus is sending John the message through one of his angels to him, who's communicating it to John. So here's where we get the revelation. It's coming directly from Jesus, and it's about Jesus. This is sitting down with Jesus,

getting more disclosure, full disclosure. It would be like a one-on-one interview with him saying, "Jesus, tell me more about yourself. "Tell me more about what you've done. "Tell me more about what you're gonna do. "I just want to hear." And Jesus is like, "Okay, this is coming from me, and it's about me. "I'm sending it through the angel "to my servant, or slave John, "and he's going to communicate "everything that I'm telling him "so that you as the church can know what I want you to know. "I'm gonna unveil some things, "I'm gonna disclose some things "which you don't already know."

Here's something else that I would say about this book. This book is apocalyptic in genre, which means there's a ton of symbolism. It's highly symbolic. That doesn't change the way we read the word. There are gonna be times that we read this book, and you're going to see some symbolism, and then it's going to be revealed what those symbols mean. And other times we're not gonna know what those symbols mean, and so based upon other texts, we're gonna make our best guess as to what that looks like. I will try to tell you where here specific, Jesus saying this is what it is, other times, here's where I'm putting this together, and where I'm landing on what we do. It doesn't change the fact that we can read God's word and understand it. God gave us his word so you can understand it. You don't need to have five PhDs to study the book of Revelation and understand it. And I know for me for several years, almost two or three decades, I would listen to people talk about this book, And I would leave thinking, I don't see that anywhere in my Bible. I don't see any of the stuff that you're talking about, but that's really cool. That's really fanciful. Here's the other thing I would say to you: all of us have in our body what's called embedded theology. Embedded theology

means this: All of us have convictions and beliefs about different doctrines that we hold because of who we spend our time with, who has taught us, and what we think that we know. Here's what I'm telling you to do with that, we all have it based upon whether you grew up in the church or out of the church, or what tradition you were, you have understanding, okay. Many of you, and really in the last 150 years, and there's been a certain theology that has been proposed. If you've read the Left Behind books and series, you have embedded theology. You think, here's the way it's going to happen. I'm asking you to put all that on hold, let God's word speak to us, and then see if that's really where you land, or if you don't land. And it's okay. And that's what we need to get to.

Here's the other part, it's the revelation of whom?

- [Man] Jesus Christ.

- Say it really loud, 'cause,

- [Congregation] Jesus Christ.

- It's a revelation of Jesus Christ. Now, when we talk about the doctrines, or the teachings, or the understanding of Jesus Christ, we're talking about Christology, the study of Christ. When we talk about eschatology, eschatos means the last things. And we're talking about that, we're talking about the study of the end times. When we talk about theology, it comes from theos, which is God. So it's the study of God. Here's what I would say to you. If your Christology is not greater than your eschatology, you have poor theology. Meaning, if you're more excited about charts and graphs than you

are about Jesus Christ, you have bad theology. I remember sitting in seminary one time, and I would take these classes that I was going to take, and I would have certain professors that would talk about our opponents' belief. Well who are our opponents? The people that believe differently than us. Like they're not our opponents. Satan and hell are our enemies. Death is our enemy. Other Christians are not our enemies, they're not our opponents. You understand what I'm saying? This is a book revealing Jesus. If you love Jesus, you're going to love this book, right. So why are we studying this? Because this is an unveiling of more of Jesus. If you love the gospels, you're going to love the book of Revelation. Like this is where we're getting to. And so the reason that we need to study this is because it's scripture, God's put it in there, and let's talk about end times for just a second.

Are we in the end times? People talk about all the time, it's the end time, we're in the end times, we're in the end times. Well, let's just talk about what the end times are. Let's set a framework for that so we understand what we're talking about. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, was buried, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, the end times clock started, okay. It ends at his second coming. Are we in the end times?

- Yes.

- Yes. We're getting closer and closer and closer and closer. Now some people will say, "Well, that's what they've said for hundreds of years. "That's what they've said for thousands of years. "How can you be so sure?" Well, let me just read some of the texts in the New Testament, you tell me if you're seeing some of these things. Keep in

mind, we started in Genesis where we saw God created everything in the universe out of nothing, and a little over 4,000 years later, Jesus Christ became incarnate. And he said he was coming soon. And then guess what? 2000 years have passed. Is he coming soon? I think he is. I think he is.

But just listen to this, you decide for yourself what times we're living in. In Second Timothy chapter three verses one through five, it talks about what the end times will look like. See if you've ever seen any of these things in our day. "But realize this, that in the last days, "difficult times will come. "For men will be lovers of themselves, "lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, "disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, "unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, "without self-control, brutal, haters of good, "treacherous, reckless, conceited, "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, "holding a form of godliness "although they have denied its power. "Avoid such men as these." Do you see any of those things? That's just front page headlines no matter what newspaper you're reading right now. Like we are living there. And what the book of Revelation will do is it will create an urgency for you, you'll see this. That's one of the reasons that we're gonna read it.

But first and foremost, the reason that we're studying this is scripture. This is God's living and active word. Jesus is the embodiment of his living and active word, and he wants to reveal more about himself. So if you love Jesus, and you want to know more about Jesus, this is scripture saying I'm gonna tell you more about who Jesus is. That's why we must study this book. Secondly, why teach revelation? Because it creates an urgency, and a sobering choice to live completely for Christ. This

book will create an urgency, and a sobering choice to live completely for Christ. After Jesus tells us how John received the message through his angel, what did John do? "Who testified to the word of God, "and to the testimony of Jesus, even to all that he saw." Well, what's the word of God? What's the word of God? The word of God is his written word, right, the scriptures. The word of God is also the logos, the living word of God. Jesus said he was the embodiment of all of the scriptures. What was John testifying to? That the word of God, every bit of it, is true. What else was he testifying to? The testimony of Jesus. What's the testimony of Jesus? The testimony of Jesus is that he's the only God of the universe who became incarnate flesh, who died on the cross for the sins of humanity, who rose from the dead, and he's the only way to God the Father, and he's coming back to judge the world, both the living and the dead. That's the testimony of Jesus. Everything Jesus did and taught as the testimony of Jesus.

So let's talk about the word testify. What's it mean to testify? If you testify in court, you're talking about what you saw. The Greek word testify mean something far more than that. The Greek word is, martureo, it's where you get the word to bear witness to. It means that John lived his life in such a way that everybody that knew him said, "This man believes that the word of God is true, "and this man believes that everything "that Jesus Christ said and did is true, "and he's living his entire life "banked upon those two truths." Can I just tell you there's nothing else to bank your life on? Bank your life on the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus, and there's an awesome return on investment. But he bore witness to. So for you to say, I'm bearing

witness, here would be the understanding. The understanding would be this: If people that know you, Christian and not, would there be enough evidence in your life to convict you if you were on trial to say that you bear witness to the fact that the word of God is true, and that you bear witness to the fact that Jesus Christ's testimony is true. Would you be convicted? How long would the trial take? Would you have to call extra witnesses to really prove and have character, or when people put you on trial and be like, this is an open and shut case. John bore witness to the fact. We have of the other apostles that survived, Judas Iscariot hung himself, of the other apostles that survived, all of them according to church history were martyred, except for one, John.

This book was written in about 95 A.D. at a time where there was extreme persecution towards Christians. And John has been banned to the Island of Patmos. Why? Because government officials no longer wanted to hear a man who bore witness and testified to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. And because he did, instead of killing him, they sent him away so he couldn't tell anybody else. And God said, I'll use that. I'll have you write a book and unveil even more about Jesus so that every generation of the church from now on can hear about who he is. Can you believe a government that was that totalitarian enough that didn't want to hear about the word of God and the testimony of Jesus? If you don't, you're gonna see one real soon. It's coming. I've been telling you this for years, wake up, right. There's an urgency to this message. This is not just written in John's day. Now I wouldn't say this exegetically. I believe that when scripture is written, what it meant is what it means. What it meant for John is what it means for us. If I'm teaching it here, it needs to be true in every place in



the world. If I'm teaching it here, it means if I go to Chennai, India, what I'm teaching will be true. It means if I go to Tel Aviv, Israel it means what I'm teaching is true. I don't need to change my words because of culture, the word of God can speak. John's giving his life for the testimony of Jesus and the word of God.

Now why is this so important? Can I just tell you why? Because in America, we have a weak, westernized, watered down version of the gospel that has elements of truth, but we don't tell people the whole truth. We don't. Okay. So what we tell people, because the question most people ask is this: "What's the least I can possibly do, "and still get into heaven?" And then we tell them, "Well, if you just believe that Jesus died on the cross, "You'll go." "Great, I believe it. "Now I'm gonna go live my sinful life "any way that I wanted." Can I just tell you there's nowhere in the Bible that says that's salvific. All right, you've been tricked. Jesus' called to salvation was this: "If anyone would come after me, he must," what? Deny himself. So if you're gonna follow me, it's not about you, must take up his cross, which means you die to your ideas, and you're gonna follow me, which means I'm the King and you're the slave. Like that's entrance into the kingdom. Like that's not like, well, maybe someday I'll get to that. That's entrance, according to Jesus. Right? And when you read through the New Testament apostles, and when you read through the things that they were saying, what did Paul say? Galatians 2:20. "I have been crucified with Christ." What's that mean? I've died to myself. It's no longer I who live, it's Christ who lives in me, the life I live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. I'm dead. Right. What about Colossians three, verses three and four? Says that he's, I'll read it to you.

Colossians three, three and four, "For you have died, "and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. "When Christ, who is your life appears, "then you'll appear with him in glory." That's why Paul was able to say in Philippians 1:21, "For me to live as Christ, to die is gain." Why? Because I've already died. I've died to my ideas, I've died to my allegiance. I've died so that I can serve Christ fully, and I'm following him. If you live that way, that's the gospel. The gospel is not what little you can do and still get in, or how can God bless me and give me stuff that I want so I can live my best life now. That has nothing to do with biblical teaching. Biblical teaching is, "are you going all in with me?"

Now here's what I'll say to you. When you read this, here's where you gonna feel the urgency, and here's where you're gonna feel the sobering, okay. This book, when you read it, and whether you re read it in 151 A.D., whether you read it in 508 A.D., whether you read it in 1350 A.D. in the Middle Ages, whether you read it today, it's gonna create an urgency, and here's what this book's gonna do. It's gonna comfort the troubled, and it's gonna trouble the comforted. That's what this book does. If you're living for Jesus, you're gonna experience difficulties in this world. The Bible says in Second Timothy that anyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. You go all in on the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, and you start living it, and proclaiming it, and doing it, you will have opposition to what you do. That's a promise. This book will bring you great comfort when you do. If you're living your life completely for yourself thinking that you're saved, this book is gonna trouble you to death. And some of you, you need to be troubled. Because some of you that

come to Brave Church, some of you that tune in online, you're not saved. You falsely think that you are because you're a good person, or you've done some things, or you felt God's presence around you. When you read this book, you are gonna be troubled because when you see the glory of God and all that he is coming, and the picture of what's happening, you're gonna realize, I'm not ready for him. I'm not ready for that. And this is gonna give you the opportunity to get ready. It's gonna create an urgency, and a sobering about Jesus Christ and how you're going to respond to him.

I need to say this to pastors, I have to say this. These two things, the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ. That's paramount for everybody in the church. That's paramount for the church. Can I just say this to pastors and future pastors? For Christ's sake, would you preach the word, and live the testimony of Jesus? Can you do that? Listen, if you're not gonna preach the word of God, and live for the testimony of Jesus, what else do you have to offer? It's not about being hip, it's not about being cool, it's not about any of that stuff. It's about the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. And that's what I say to every pastor. All your future pastors, make it about the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. It's the only thing that matters. Secondly, for all of you that aren't pastors, would you please let your life bear witness to the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus. Would you please, for Christ's sake, live your lives in such a way at Brave Church, that people that see you here and outside of here would say, "He or she are living for the glory of God, "there's no doubt about it. "I may thoroughly disagree with her, "I may thoroughly disagree with him, doesn't matter. "I can't change them from believing "in the word of God and the testimony of Jesus

Christ."

But that's why we're studying this book, right? I mean, if we want to learn about Jesus, that's one thing. But we're called to go all in with Jesus. See this book is gonna read you into the book. There's no sidelines. There's no grand standing. For those of you want to stand outside and watch this, you're gonna be troubled at your core. You're gonna be bothered. See, if you came to study Revelation so you could sit in the stand, and make a chart, and graph it all out, and tell people how smart you are, you missed the whole point of the book. We're not writing the book. Because when you get to heaven, it's not like you're gonna bring your chart to Jesus and say, "Look what I did." What God wants from you is say, yeah, but what about my word, and what about my testimony, and how come you didn't live for that? That's the purpose of the book. So we want to live in such a way where we're stirred by God, where we're stirred by him. And by the way, none of us have arrived, so all of us should be stirred by him at some point. I mean, if you can hear the word of God every single week when it's being faithfully proclaimed and you're like, "Got that, I always do what God wants." You have no self-awareness whatsoever. Right? I would even tell you as I'm reading through this book, and I'm studying it a fresh this week, and God's able to speak deeply to me. All right?

And so I'm just encouraging you again, just humble yourself. Jesus said of all the people born of woman, there's none that has been better, or greater than John the Baptist. And yet John the Baptist said what? "I'm not even worthy to untie the thong of his sandal. "He must increase, but I must decrease." Would you let Jesus increase in

your life during this series? Would you decrease? He testified to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus. I mean, if it was just these two reasons, it's good enough. It's scripture, it's gonna reveal more of Jesus, it's gonna create an urgency, and a sobering in my life to live completely for him. And what else?

Third reason, why should we study revelation? Why teach revelation? Because blessing is promised to the reader, hearer, and doer. You want to be blessed? You want more blessing in your life? You want more of God's favor? This book makes a promise that blessing is promised to the reader. There's no other book in the Bible that promises blessing to the reader, notice what he says: "Blessed is he who reads, "and those who hear the words of the prophecy, "and heed the things which are written in it, "for the time is near. Blessed. Now this is the first of seven blessings you're gonna see in the book of revelation. Seven is the number of completeness, we'll talk about that in a minute. So this is the perfect blessing, this is the first of them. We read the beatitudes in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Blessed are the meek, blessed are the poor in spirit, and so on and so forth. Blessed are you when people insult you, and persecute you because of my name. When we read blessed, blessed means what it says it means. It means happy are you when, favored are you when, blessed are you when. We would think, if we as Americans when we go to church, we would think that the beatitudes would read something like this: "Blessed are you when you get a promotion, "blessed are you when you get married, "blessed are you when you have kids, "blessed are you and everybody speaks well of you. "Blessed are you when you have plenty of money in the bank. "Blessed are you when you have more time for golf.

"Blessed are you when all your friends love you, "blessed are you when everybody speaks highly." That's what we'd say blessing is. Jesus says just the opposite. All the blessed things he says are not things that would come natural to us, but only spirit-filled men and women can do. Here's what you see in this prophecy: "Blessed are you when you hear this, "blessed are you when you preach this, read this, "blessed are you when you heed this," that means you take it to heart. That means the book of Revelation is not a passive book, it's gonna cause you to act. It's gonna cause you to do something. To read the book of Revelation and just study ideas, or study graphs, or study charts, is to miss the entire point of the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation is causing you to respond to Jesus' prodding or pleading in your life to make some changes by faith for what he's going to show you. And what's he say about this book? We talked about the fact that the genre was apocalyptic, but notice, "blessed are those who read, "and those who hear the words of the" what? The prophecy. Prophecy are things that haven't happened yet.

And I want to let you know, there's four main ways that you can read this book, you probably need to be aware of them. We'll talk about some of these other things. And for those of you that want to know big words, and like, you know, dispensationalism, and pre-millennialism, and all, we'll get to all that, you'll know what they are, but they're not that big of a deal. But there's four ways to really understand this book. One is the preterist just understanding. The preterist understanding is this book was written earlier than 95 A.D., which there's not a lot of evidence for. And that all of the book is complete history. That any prophecy that was in that book was

literally fulfilled. Some call it even *ex eventu* prophecy, where what we're reading about are things that have already happened, and we're just talking about it. Very few people hold to that position, just so you know. Oftentimes, critical scholars at seminary hold to that position so that they can diffuse the Bible. There are some born again believers that hold to that position, I would not be one of them. I don't think a good scrutiny and exegesis will uphold that. Second is a historicist position. Historicist position. The historicist position was pretty much propagated in the Middle Ages. It represents a history of the church, that the entire book of Revelation is really just an unfolding of all human history. So for instance, when we start studying this stuff in churches, the first church, Ephesus, was really the first few years of the church. And by the time we get to Laodicea, that's the end time. And so we're arbitrarily deciding where to put things into history. The challenge for that is, whoever's reading the book gets to decide wherever they want to put these different things, and I think that's difficult to do as well. There's an idealist position. The idealist position is that the book of Revelation is just simply about good triumphing over evil, and God wins over Satan, and no matter what generation you're in, that works. And there is some truth to that, but I just can't get away from that word prophecy. I can't get away from when I read the book of Revelation that I haven't seen all the things unfold that I'm reading about in this book, which is the fourth position, which is what I am, just so you know where I'm coming from, it's a futurist position. A majority of the people that you have read or know in this generation would likely hold to that position. But it's a belief that there are prophetic things on God's calendar, which have not happened yet, which are going to happen,

and blessed are you when you read them, and hear them, and take heed for those things that are coming. When you are ready for all that God is going to unfold. And I believe that there are some things in the book of Revelation that have been fulfilled, that have happened, but there are many and most of those things which are yet to come.

And here's what you see. That blessing is promised to the reader. So I'm encouraging you when we go through the series, don't just hear it. Don't just read it, take heed to it. Now I'd encourage you too, now that you are gonna have your own Bible, read the entire book of Revelation in one sitting. If you're not a good reader, it's okay. You can go to an audio Bible and get one, it'll take you just a little over an hour to listen to the whole book. If you're a faster reader, you could probably do it in 30 minutes or less. But when you see the whole of Revelation unfold, it's gonna give you a better picture, and put things into perspective. If you've never read the book before, you're gonna be thoroughly confused the first time you read it, I promise you. All right, it's okay. But the more you put in the time to study God's word, the more that God is going to show you. My professor at Dallas Seminary, Howard Hendricks, he used to say, "God does not yield his fruit to the lazy." Okay. I've also heard it said that raking leaves is easier than mining for gold, or digging for diamonds. We're gonna dig deep, we're gonna mine for gold in this text. We want to understand what God is promising to us, the blessing that he's promised to us, so that we as the reader, and the hearer, and the doer, can do this. I mean, this is no different than what we read about in the new Testament in James, the half-brother of Jesus. In James chapter one verses 22



and following he says, "But prove yourselves to be doers of the word, "not merely hearers who delude themselves. "For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, "he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror. "For once he has looked at himself and gone away, "he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was." And we've all had that experience.

We go to church, God speaks to us, we know what we ought to do, and we don't do it. Every single one of us has gone through that. Here's what he's saying. When you read the book of Revelation, don't do that. In the way in which God speaks to you, take action, take heed to what he's saying. Understand what's coming, and how you need to prepare for his return. These are good reasons to study this book. I'm compelled by them.

The fourth reason is this. Why teach Revelation? Because the gospel is paramount, and central throughout the book. The gospel of Jesus Christ is paramount, and central throughout the book. And notice who John addresses: "John to the seven churches." Who's the book for it's for? It's for the church. We're gonna read about seven specific churches in the book of Revelation. He said to the seven churches that are in Asia, that would be modern day Turkey right now, we'll take a look at those in the coming weeks. "Grace and peace to you from him who is, "and who was, and who is to come." Now does that seem a little backwards to you? I thought it was was, and is, and is to come. Why does he say is and was, and is to come? I mean, doesn't that seem a little bit out of order? I mean, maybe John made a mistake. How many mistakes are there in your Bible, do you any of you know? Hey, there's zero mistakes.

There's no typos, there's no correction. Why does he say "who is, and who was, and who is to come"? Here's why, because the God of the universe is present with us now. God is alive. He's the God who is. He's the God who is in your life, He's the God who is working in your life, he's the God who is revealing himself, he's the God who is. What else is he? He's the God who was. We started in Genesis 1:1, the most difficult verse to believe in all the Bible. That in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. That out of nothing, God formed the entire universe in six literal days. He's the God who was, and guess what? That God transcended all time and space before the world was even created. He's the God who is, he's the God who was, guess what else he is? He's the God who is to come. Well, how come the world's so crazy right now? And how come it's just like this? Is it ever gonna get any better? Oh yeah, he's coming back soon. That's what you see. And do you hear the urgency of the language that we've read today throughout the text? To testify to his servant, John what much soon take place, which are written for the time is near.

Friends, he's coming, and he's coming soon. I mean, wouldn't it be cool if he came like, one day when we were all in church together? I mean we just all go up together and it was like, so cool. I mean, with all these billions of people here, I mean, I was never gonna find my wife or my kids, and now they're right here with me. I mean, isn't that awesome? Like he's coming, he's going to make everything right. He's coming, he's still the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords. He's coming, you don't need to worry about what's going on in the world. You need to be aware of it, but you should have more awareness of what's happening. It tells you to get your eyes off the world,

and put your eyes on Jesus Christ. That's what he's saying. Now here's the gospel. Who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne. Seven spirits. I see nothing else in my Bible all throughout biblical literature that tells me there's seven spirits around his throne. You need to understand something. The number seven is the number of completeness or perfectness. So when we read about the seven churches, there were seven literal churches, but I believe he's also talking about the complete, perfect church. And what we're gonna see is as God talks to these specific seven churches, we're gonna learn things about us and our church for what God gives commendation to, and what he says is really good, and condemnation to, and what he says is really bad.

So as we study these specific seven churches, we're gonna see the seven churches, the perfect church, to see what does God value in the church. And we'll be able to measure ourselves, Brave Church, against it. Is Brave Church a good church? 17 of you think so. All right, cool, thanks. Is Brave a good church? Thank you. But what we want to do is look at the scriptures because it doesn't mean we're a perfect church, 'cause we're filled with sinners. So there's some things that we need to be stimulated in that we can get better at, right? There's some things we're doing well, there's some things we can grow in, right? And so that's the seven churches. When you see the seven spirits, it's talking about the perfect spirit, the complete spirit, perhaps the Holy Spirit before the throne. I see that all throughout the Bible. So I'm taking the seven there to mean the Holy Spirit before the throne of God. And the reason I take it that way too, is because here we have from him who is, and who was, and who is to come,

that's God the father, and then you have the Holy spirit, the seven spirits who are before his throne in the beginning of verse five, and from Jesus Christ. What do you see there? You see our Trinity God. Unlike anyone else ever. You have one essence of God made up of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The father is not the son and the spirit, and the son is not the father and the spirit, And the spirit is not the father and the son, but they are all of one essence. And what do you see? You see them right there, all around the throne. The one who is, and who was, and who is to come with the Holy spirit and Jesus Christ. And they are all in community together as they always have been, right. And when we see this, we see that the gospel is paramount and central throughout the book.

So where do you see that? I see it from Jesus Christ. How does the book start off talking about Jesus Christ? The faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the Kings of the earth, to him who loves us, and released us from our sins. How? By his blood. Is that not the gospel, or what? Let's start there and we'll work our way backwards. Jesus Christ is the only one that can forgive you of your sins. Jesus Christ is the only one that can make your dead life alive. Jesus Christ is the only one that can present you to the father, God. There is no other way. And it's only through his blood. To reject Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection is to reject God. There are no other gods. He is the King of Kings, he is the Lord of Lords. He is the one who sets us free, not only from the penalty of our sin, but from the power of our sin. And ultimately from the presence of our sin. He is God. He is the only way. And that is the only way that you can know Christ, is through the gospel. That's the gospel. Which

means if you're here today, and you've never turned from your sins and turned to Christ, you can call yourself whatever you want, you're just not a Christian. A Christian who is one who's turned from his or her sin, and turn to Christ, and by grace received everything that God has for you. Not by anything you've ever done, but all by his grace because of his sovereign mercy in your life. That's the gospel. Who's Jesus? He's the only one that can set you free from your sin. He's the only one that can deliver you from the judgment that's coming. He's the only one that can present you faultless before the father, and there are no other gods. What else is he? He's the ruler of the kings of the earth. None of you moved. Okay. He's the ruler of the kings of the earth. We live in a day and age where people are living fearful based upon who's in office. I got something to tell you today. It don't matter who's in office, Jesus Christ is ruler over them. Amen? And you need to know that. You need to know that, because Jesus is part of a monarchy. He's not part, he's not an elected official. And when he comes back and establishes his kingdom, there is no voting. Some people are all concerned about voting. Remember people talking about these dominion voting systems, and they're wrong and this and that. I don't know any facts. Here's what I do know, I know my Bible. Can you take a look at verse six? "And he made us to be a kingdom of priests "to his God and Father, to him be the glory and the" what? "Dominion forever and ever, amen." Jesus said, I don't know much about your dominion systems, but I know this: when I get back there ain't no vote, 'cause I have dominion over everything. Amen? He rules the kings of the earth. He says, get your eyes off elected officials, and put your eyes on me. I'm in charge. I'm coming soon. The end is near. Be ready for

me. That's what he's saying, right? He's the one who's freed us, he's the one who's over the kings of the earth. Let's continue to make our way back through the text. He's the first born of the dead. Now cult movements will oftentimes use verses like that to say, "See, he wasn't God, he was first born. "He was born." Jesus was born in the Virgin Mary. He's homoousian, or of the same essence as his father. The father is eternal, he can beget that which is eternal. Jesus Christ was never created, he was, became incarnate. He's always existed. What does it mean he was the first born of the dead? Well, here's what it means. Firstborn simply means this: preeminence. Means he has all preeminence. And how was he the first born of the dead? Because he's the first one to ever die and rise from the dead who is still alive. He's the first fruit of all that. It shows that all authority and dominion and rule is his. That's what it means. We see this all throughout the scripture. God refers to Israel as his first born, even though it wasn't the first nation. God refers to David as his firstborn, even though he wasn't the only child. Firstborn is rank and prominence of order. Jesus Christ is first in rank. He rose from the dead to validate that he is the eternal son of God so that anybody who believes in him will not taste death either, that's what it means. And even in the book of Colossians, when we read about how they created everything in the universe, and that nothing was created without him, and that he's before all things, verse 18 of Colossians chapter one says he's also the head of the body of the church, and he is the beginning, the first born from the dead. He has first rank and preeminence in everything. It doesn't mean that he was created. Jesus Christ was not created. God can't be created. He's always been God. That's who he is. He released us from our sins, he's the ruler of the

Kings of the earth. He's the first born of the dead. And what is he? He he's the faithful witness. It means if you can't trust anybody else in this world, guess who you can trust. You can trust Jesus Christ's testimony and his word. When he says I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the father, except through me, you can trust that. You say, well, how can I trust Jesus? Here's what Jesus said in John 8:14 Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I testify about myself, my testimony is true "for I know where I came from, and I know where I'm going. "But you do not know where I came from, "or where I am going." What was he saying? Anything I say is true. You can bank on it. He's the faithful witness, the first born from the dead. He's the ruler of the kings of the earth. He released us from all our sins, and what did he do? The gospel is not just freeing you from sin so you can go to heaven. The gospel is teaching you how to serve the Lord Jesus Christ while you're here. He made us to be a kingdom of priests to his God and father. What do priests do? Priests minister to the Lord, priests serve the Lord, priests bring other people to serve the Lord, that's their job. What are you called to do? Some people have a problem in life like, what's my calling? What am I gonna do? How am I gonna do it? What's my? Here's one of them. You're gonna minister unto the Lord with everything you have. And Jesus Christ is gonna be the foundation of your life. And then you're gonna serve other people, and bring them in to serve the Lord as well. That's how God establishes his kingdom. We are all set up to be a kingdom of priests unto our God. We're a chosen nation, a royal priesthood, right. That's what we're called to do. We're called to be that royal priesthood that ministers and serves to the Lord out of the overflow of our life, and calls other people

to serve him as well. That's why the gospel is paramount, it's central throughout this whole book. And then all glory and dominion are his forever and ever, amen. That means Jesus Christ is in control of all things. While you see this world spinning out of control, and I'll be honest, I mean, in my lifetime, I haven't seen some of the things that I'm seeing even this week in our culture, I just haven't seen 'em. And if I focused on 'em, I know it can cause fear in my heart. And if I thought about 'em, and I thought about it, this is where we're going, it would cause anxiety unless my eyes are on the Lord Jesus, where he says, "I got all this. "I'm the faithful witness, I'm the first born from the dead, "I'm the ruler of all the kings of the earth. "And you can bank on me because I'm telling you the truth, "that when I come back, I will establish dominion "forever and ever to which we say, Amen." Come Lord Jesus, amen. That's what it's about. And so when we see this, the gospel's paramount and central throughout the book. Now you're gonna watch as we go through, and you can make decisions as to where you place things, and time things, and how it works. But there are gonna be a number of people even when the gospel's proclaimed, that are gonna say, "We want nothing to do with you, God." There's gonna be scores of people that do that. There's gonna be a massive apostasy from the church that many people that have been part of a local church and in the church and doing things in the church, but weren't actually saved, they're gonna depart from the faith, we're gonna see all that. That doesn't change the gospel. And the gospel doesn't change either with the fact that God has a righteous judge, and he's coming to judge sin. He's coming to judge both the living and the dead. That's a good God. Because if God saw all the injustice in the world and just



said, "Oh, I'm sorry." Then we could ask this question. "God, how could you be good and allow that to happen?" But we'll never be able to ask that question, because God answers it. He's gonna establish his kingdom in justice, and in righteousness, and truth. And he's gonna punish all injustice. And because all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, it's the reason we must repent and be ready for his coming so he doesn't hold us accountable. And he loved us enough so that we wouldn't have to. I mean, if those were just the reasons, if we just had four I would say, "God, that's enough, okay, I'm in, "I'm in on this study, let's let's do this thing." How many of us so far in on this study? You wanna do this? All right. But let's do one final one. Why teach Revelation? Because Jesus Christ's coming is certain, and all his attributes will be on full display. You can take this to the bank. There are people in every generation, "Where's his coming, it's been thousands of years, where's," I'm telling you, he's coming. The word of God teaches he's coming, and he's coming soon. Notice what he says, "Behold, he is coming with the clouds. "And every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, "and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him." Now I want to set this up for you. The longer you study the Bible, and the more Old Testament you understand, the more New Testament you understand, the more you're gonna see how it fits into the book of Revelation. So you have to understand, two Old Testament verses are being used here. The first is Daniel chapter seven and verse 13. We won't spend a lot of time there today, we'll get to Daniel as we go through our study. But notice what it says in Daniel 7:13, "I kept looking in night visions and behold, "with the clouds of heaven, one like a son of man "was coming, and he came up to the ancient of

days." One like the son of man coming is the Lord Jesus Christ. And he came up to the ancient of days, that's his father, right? So Daniel had a vision of what this was going to be like. Now, why is this such a big deal? Because sometimes in our New Testament, we read about Jesus Christ being the son of God, and the son of man. And we think son of God, okay, he's God, but son of man, he's human. That's not what son of man means. Son of man means what Daniel seven said, the son of man is the God-man Messiah. The son of man is the one who's going to rule and reign. This will give you context at the end of Mark's gospel, when Jesus was being tried by the high priest and he keeps asking him this same question over and over, you know, are you the son of God? Are you the son of God? Are you the son of God? And Jesus looks at him. He could have just said yes, but he kept silent and did not answer. Again, the high priest questioned him and saying to him, "Are you the Christ, the son of the living God, "the blessed one, are you the one "that we're supposed to be looking for?" And Jesus said in Mark 14:62, "I am." Have we heard that before? I've always been, and I will always be, and I'm standing right here in front of you now, I am. "And you shall see the son of man "sitting at the right hand of power, "and coming with the clouds of heaven." What's he quoting? He's quoting Daniel 7:13. He's saying this, "You're asking me if I'm the son of man? "You're asking me if I'm God in flesh? I am. "And by the way, the next time you see me, "I'll be fulfilling the prophecy of Daniel seven, "and you will see me and know that I'm the God of the universe, 'cause I'll be coming to judge you. At that point, the priest tears his robe, and the crucifixion scene begins. Why? Because Jesus Christ was calling himself the son of man, which meant that he was God. Now this is one of

those places in the texts I want you to wrestle with, okay? I want you to wrestle with this, but notice what the text says, "Behold, he is coming in the clouds, "and every eye will see him." How many eyes is that?

- Hey, you didn't listen, I'm gonna ask the question again, I want a full participation, it's not rhetorical. "Behold, he's coming in the clouds, "and every eye will see him." How many eyes is that?

- [Congregation] All.

- Who's not gonna see him?

- [Congregation] No one.

- According to the Bible, every eye will see him. Now just wrestle with that over the course of the next series of weeks. Even those who have pierced him. Now, we don't have further revelation on the people that drove nails into Jesus' hands and feet as to whether they repented and trusted Christ at some point in time. If they didn't, they're certainly in hell. But you get this picture that even people in hell are gonna see Jesus when he comes. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him. Now, how many is all? That's everyone. That's every people, tongue, and nation. They're gonna see him, and those who don't know him are going to mourn over him. That's a reference to Zechariah 12:10, in the second part of the verse, "So that they will look on me, whom they have pierced. "And they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only son. "And they will weep bitterly over him "like the bitter weeping of a firstborn." What's gonna happen when Jesus Christ returns? Every single person in the world that has

ever breathed a breath will see him. Everyone. All of them. And those who haven't trusted Christ are gonna weep, and they're gonna lament. And if you haven't trusted Christ, you're gonna weep. And you're gonna lament, because you're gonna realize that that pastor that preached the word of God, when you read the word of God, when your mom told you about the word of God, when your friend told you about the word of God, that they were telling you the truth. And at that point in time it's gonna be too late. Now I'm challenging you, and again, just, you have time to look up the verse. I'm challenging you to find the verse in the Bible where there's a secret and silent rapture of pulling away of the saints. There's not one verse in the Bible that talks about a secret and silent rapture. The only problem I have with a secret and silent rapture is that everything I read about in the Bible, it's not secret nor silent. Everybody's gonna see him. First Thessalonians 4:17 says there's gonna be a cry of an arch angel, and a shout of command. And all the dead in Christ are gonna rise, and everybody who's believing in him are gonna be caught up in the air to be with Jesus forever, and only Kirk Cameron's gonna see it. I can't find that in my Bible. Every eye's gonna see him. His second coming's not secret. His second coming is to put himself on display with all of his attributes, his glory, his power, his might his honor, and blessing is gonna be all his, amen. I don't see what some people see. Now I can be wrong. I'm not, but I could be. No I'm, I'm open. But I'm just telling you, "Behold he's coming in the clouds, every eye will see him, "even those who pierced him, "and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him." So it is to be, amen.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- When he comes back, I mean, some of you probably had this question, 'cause if you grew up in an evangelical church, and you walked home sometime, or you went to a football game, or you went to a meeting and nobody was there and like, "Oh, did I miss the rapture? Did I miss the rapture?" Nobody's missing the rapture, y'all. Every eye will see him. Every eye around the globe will see the Lord Jesus Christ. We'll talk more about the rapture as we get further in this, and talk about different positions. And then here's what Jesus said: "I am the Alpha and the Omega says the Lord. "Who is, says the Lord, God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come. "The almighty. "That's who I am." That's who he is. His coming is certain, and his attributes will be on full display. Now, why does he talk about the Alpha and Omega? in our English alphabet, we have 26 letters, A to Z. In the Greek alphabet, they had 24 letters, Alpha to Omega. It went something like this, Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, Epsilon, Zeta, Eta, Theta, Iota, Kappa, Lambda, Mu, Nu, Xi, Omicron, Pi, Rho Sigma, Tau, Upsilon, Phi, Chi, Psi, Omega, right. Those are the 24 letters in the Greek alphabet. He's saying, "I'm the beginning, I'm the one that started all this." He's saying, "I'm the end, "I'm the one that's gonna bring it to a finish." I was watching a movie recently, I can't remember what movie it was, but it was something like this. You've seen movies like this, where somebody said, "That guy started it, I'm gonna finish it." And I remember watching that thinking, I don't know what's about to happen, but it's gonna be good. Here's what Jesus said. "Nobody else started it, I started it. "And I'm about to finish it." And the reason we need to be ready is because Jesus Christ is coming back to a city near you, and you need to be ready because when he comes, every eye will see him. And if

you're not ready for him, you will lament and mourn and recognize, I didn't place my faith in the one that I should have. That's what the Bible teaches. That's what the text says. So Jesus is coming, it's certain. That's why we lament some of the things that go on in our culture. There's always gonna be challenges in our culture. There's always gonna be things that go on. But as Paul said in Philippians chapter three, verses 20 and 21, "But our citizenship is in heaven, "and we eagerly await a savior, the Lord, Jesus Christ. "Come, Lord Jesus." I mean, these are five reasons why God spells out that this would be a good book for us to spend time in. Not only to read it, but to hear it, and to grow in it. This is not rhetorical. Who here by hearing all these five reasons would say, "I'm in, I want to do this." Right? This is gonna be a great book. We're gonna have a great time. We're gonna learn more about Jesus, and who he really is, and what he looks like. We're gonna learn more about his love for the church, and why you want to be part of a good one. We're gonna learn more about worship. We're gonna learn more about his judgements. We're gonna learn more about what's coming for us who are believers, and all the blessings that are to come. It's so fascinating that God would take the time to pen this book so that we could thoroughly know him, and all that he wants to do. And it's a beautiful thing. So I believe that the best way to start our series, to talk about our faithful witness and the ruler over all the kings of the earth, and the one that freed us by his blood would be to share communion together. And be reminded that it's his blood that brings us. Because for some of you, you may be here today and say, "I've never trusted Christ. "If he came back today, I'm in big peril, I'm in trouble." Hey, good news for you today, you're still alive. And Jesus Christ loves you

with an unconditional love, and he wants you to be his, and he wants you to be part of his family, and you can turn to him right now and give your life to him. So as you're holding that communion cup in your hand, just hang on to that. I'll come back up and we will take that momentarily. But for right now, let me just pray over you. Lord Jesus, we thank you for your word. Lord Jesus, we thank you for who you are. Lord Jesus, we thank you that you're a God who loves us. And Lord, before we even celebrate communion, we want to make it possible because you said anybody can come to the table that believes in you. If you've never placed your faith and trust in Jesus, you know, you may be a church goer, you may be religious, you may be a good person, you may know you're an awful person. Makes no difference, Jesus came for you. If you want a relationship with the God of the universe, you can pray like this: Dear Jesus, I know for fact, I'm a sinner, and that I'm separated from you. But I believe that you died on the cross for my sins, and rose from the dead. Right now, I want to repent of my sins, and I want to trust you as my personal Lord and savior. Come into my life, Lord Jesus. And Lord, for those of us who know you, for those of us who have turned from our sin and turned to you, Lord, we know, and we're reminded of daily by the enemy, the accuser of the brethren, who we are right now, who we've been in our past, nervous about where we're going in the future that we might sin again. Lord, remind us that because of the cross, we have been cleansed from all of our sin. Lord, do a work in us today as we prepare, in Jesus' name, amen.- Lord Jesus, we give you all the glory, honor, and praise for who you are. Lord, as we open your word, we believe that you have a word for us, and so Lord speak to us today. Lord, help us. Be

helpful to me as I teach, be helpful to us as we receive, and Lord help us to do what you would require of us. Lord, we believe every time your word is open, because your word is living and active, because your word is true, because your word will never fade away, that every time we're faithful and proclaiming the word, you speak directly to us. Lord, we believe you have a word for us today. So do your work in our hearts, we pray. And now for all God's people who are listening, who desire to hear what God says, and believe what he says, and receive what he says, and by faith put into practice what he shows you, will you very loudly this morning agree with me by saying the word, amen. Amen.

- Amen.

- Well this morning we're gonna start the book of Revelation. And that has been part of our series called The Alpha and Omega series. We began in the book of Genesis, and took a look at the first 11 chapters, and talked about why it was so important to understand those first 11 chapters in the book of Genesis, and how it set the foundation for God being the creator, and all that he established. And many of the major doctrines that we believe come out of the first 11 chapters in the book of Genesis. Today, we begin to take a look at the end. We started in the beginning, we're taking a look at the end. But the question that we must ask ourselves is why teach Revelation? Why spend time on this book? It's an important question for us to answer because when I say I'm gonna teach the book of revelation, it engenders a response from everybody in a different kind of way. For some people, they're not very excited about it because they say, "You need like five PhDs to understand it. "I've heard it



taught over and over, "and I kind of have an idea what it means, "but if you ask me personally to defend what I believe, "there's no way I could do it. "I mean, I'm just an ordinary person, there's no way." Others don't want to study it because it's confusing. Like how do you really know what all this imagery means, and can anybody even get it right? Other people don't want to study it because they say it causes disunity in the church, because everybody has a different opinion, and there's no way we're ever going to know anyway, it's all just gonna pan out in the end, so why take the time to study this book? I would tell you this, the book of Revelation in studying it sometimes is the most, or one of the most divisive things that we can study in the church. Even when it comes to our understanding of women in ministry, or the fullness of charismatic gifts, the book of Revelation, sometimes people have an understanding of what it is, and if you don't agree with their exact understanding, you know, you're a heretic. So why would we study this? Other people think it's scary. I mean, there's a lot of talk about what's gonna happen at the end with God's holiness and his justice, and what he's going to do to people that don't believe him, and so they're scared to death. Other people just say, "Let me live, I'm young. "I want to grow up and get married, "I want to have a family. "I don't want to hear about all this end time stuff." So I think it's really important that we understand why would we do this? Why do we want to spend time doing this? I want to let you know that when it comes to preaching from this platform that I spend a lot of time seeking the Lord as to what he wants me to teach, and teaching the book of Revelation for me was something the Lord put on my heart over a year ago. I've been a Christian for 30 years, I've been studying the book over the past

year. I've studied it more than I ever have before, and I think it's very timely right now, in God's providential time, that we're teaching this book. I think it's very important for us to understand what this book has to say. And so today, what I wanted to highlight for you are five reasons why I need to teach the book of Revelations. Five reasons why we as a church need to study the book of Revelation. Because if we can't even agree as to why we need to do this, then why would we spend the coming weeks or months that we're going to spend in this book doing what we're going to do? I think it's important. And isn't it great to know that when God's Holy spirit penned this book, and gave this vision to the apostle John, that he started the book by giving us reasons why we should study it. So I'm gonna encourage you open your Bible up to Revelation, chapter one. We're gonna take a look at the first eight verses today. This is also my time to tell you, if you do not have a Bible, today is your day, okay. On the way out here in Inglewood, we will give you a Bible. This is a book that you want to get your eyes on. This is a book that you want to see for yourself. This is a book that you want to study. This is a book that you want to know, right. So I'm encouraging you, if you don't have a Bible, we'll give you one per, for free. If you want to purchase your own, that's great. I read out of the new American standard Bible if you want to follow along word for word with me, that's what I'm gonna be in. We're gonna go through this entire book, all 22 chapters of this book word by word, verse by verse, thought by thought, for everything we believe that God wants us to understand. And today we're gonna give five reasons why he wants us to do that. So open your Bibles to Revelation chapter one, I wanna read the first eight verses, then we'll see if we can unpack those

five reasons he gives us. Notice what he says: "The revelation of Jesus Christ, "which God gave him to show his bond servants "the things which must soon take place. "And he sent and communicated it "by his angel to his bondservant, John, "who testified to the word of God "and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, "Even to all that he saw.

"Blessed is he who reads, and those who hear "the words of the prophecy, "and heed the things which are written in it, "for the time is near. "John to the seven churches that are in Asia, "grace to you, and peace from him who is, "and who was, and who is to come, "and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, "and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, "the firstborn of the dead, "and the ruler of the Kings of the earth, "to him who loves us and released us "from our sins by his blood. "And he made us to be a kingdom of priests "to his God and father. "To him be the glory and dominion forever and ever amen. "Behold, he is coming with the clouds, "and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, "and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him.

"So it has to be, amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord, God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the almighty." Now in these eight verses, we're gonna see at least five reasons why we should teach the book of Revelation. Five reasons why you should listen to this teaching in the book of Revelation. And the first is this: Why teach the book of Revelation? Well first and foremost, because it's scripture. And it reveals a greater understanding of Jesus Christ. It's scripture, and it reveals a greater understanding of Jesus Christ. First and foremost, it's scripture. This is the word of God. There are 66 books in our Bible. Revelation is the 66th book in the Bible. This is God's word. God is speaking to us through his word. Anywhere you turn in

God's word, God speaks. It's why if you go to a church where the Bible is primary, and somebody is faithful to teach it, you will say things like this from time to time: "That's exactly what I was going through this week. "That's exactly what I needed to hear."

Why? Because the word of God is living and active. We're talking about the scriptures. So like any other text in the Bible, I'm gonna teach the scripture because it's the scripture. I've been called of God to preach the word. Here's my ask of you: be humble and teachable as you hear the word of God. Be humble and teachable as you hear the word of God. Listen, I'm called to preach the word, not diagram a chart. I just want to let you know, I was gonna call somebody up here this morning, but I'll just, I'll save us some time. In this Bible that I'm reading now, this New American, there's no charts in my Bible. I don't have a chart. Many people that studied the book of Revelation start with a chart, and then they're asking the pastor and everybody else, do you agree with this chart? If you start with a chart, you will start looking for things in the scripture to fit your chart. We'll get the charts. But regardless of who you are as a believer, okay, regardless of where you land on some of the things we're gonna talk about, like the timing of the rapture, we're gonna talk about, is it one or two movements, talk about the millennium and how we understand that, regardless of where you land, 90% of the things in this book, we will agree on as Christians. We'll agree on the picture of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We'll agree on the fact that he loves his church, and wants his church to be righteous and holy. We'll agree on the fact that he has a better understanding of what worship is than what we even see. We'll have an understanding that his judgments are righteous and true. We'll have an understanding that he holds all

history together, and will have an understanding that what is to come is better than what we're experiencing now. We're all going to agree on that. Here's the truth about the book of Revelation: I have yet to meet two people in the same camp, that read this book, that agree on everything, okay. I've never agreed with any one person on everything. You're not gonna agree with any one person on everything. It doesn't take away from the theme of the book of what God is saying. So if you're here today because you want to make sure my chart looks like your chart, you're here for the wrong reason. You should be here to hear the word of the Lord, and respond to what he shows you. And I'm asking you to be humble for this reason. If your convictions that you hold are true, they'll only be stronger when we're done with this series, even if you disagree with my interpretation, okay. And if not, and you're humble and teachable, God will show you things. I've been studying this book for a long time and I can tell you, even this week, I'm seeing things I never saw before. And here's why we want to be humble in this book. If you think back to Jesus Christ's first coming to the planet, who were the most theologically astute and biblically accurate in the scriptures at the time of Jesus? It was the Pharisees. The Pharisees studied the word of God more than anybody. They knew it backwards and forwards. And yet when the Son of God showed up in full bodily physical form, and stood right in front of 'em, and said, "You diligently study the scriptures because "you think that in them, you have eternal life. "Yet these are the very scriptures that testify about me, "yet you refuse to come to me to have life." What were they saying? What was Jesus telling them? You study the scriptures and you think you're right. You got your charts, you got all that stuff. You

don't even know who the one is that wrote it. It's me. Now here's the truth of this book. Someday, for those of us who are believers in the future, we're gonna look back on this book, and we're gonna be like, duh, it was so obvious. I mean, everybody could have seen, I mean it's right here. The word, I mean, but for right now, let's be humble enough to say, especially as we go through this series, "Hey, I'm here to learn." Which means in your small group, I'm not teaching this book so you can debate the timing of the rapture and the second coming, I'm not teaching it for that reason. I'm teaching it because I believe God has some things he wants to say, this is scripture. So we're gonna be humble enough to be taught the word, and receive the word, and grow in the word. As we get further out, I'll chart some things just to bring some clarity to what I'm trying to say. You may disagree with some of those things. I have friends that are in every different camp. I talk to them frequently. They see it differently than I am. They're still Christians. They're not heretics. They're brothers and sisters in Christ. They're just wrong. I mean, so. Okay, good, you're laughing. All right, so that's the point I'm trying to make. And my job as a pastor versus being a seminary professor, is not to teach in such a way that you'd be impressed with me and the charts that I'm making. My job as a pastor is to teach you the word so you can be ready for all the things that are coming. That's my purpose. So there may be times where I have to share some things that sound a little over your head, that's not my intention, I'm not trying to make myself look smart. My goal is to let you understand who Jesus is better, so you can walk with him, that's my goal. Amen?

- [Congregation] Amen.

- Now notice this, it's scripture. Now what's the first part of the scripture say? It says, "The revelation of Jesus Christ." Now I hear people talk about this book a lot. "I love Revelations, Revelations is my favorite book. "I can't wait to study revelations." Well, you might want to read the first two words of the book, 'cause there's only one Revelation. It's not plural. It's the revelation of Jesus Christ. This whole book is one revelation. There's no more revelations. There's a lot of things unfolding here, but there's one revelation. We're studying the revelation, that's what we're studying. We're not studying revelations, okay. Now you don't need to put people down when they get it wrong, they're trying. But you go to Brave Church, you want to be accurate with the word. So when you can tell people what are you studying? We're studying the Revelation. We're studying the unfolding of Jesus. And this word revelation is where we get our word apocalypse, apokalyptis. That means it's an unveiling, it's an unfolding. We're gonna see some things that we wouldn't otherwise have seen. And because it's scripture, God is gonna unfold a picture of Jesus that we haven't seen, 'cause who's the revelation of? It's the revelation of Jesus Christ, which means that this text can be taken that this revelation comes from Jesus Christ, and this revelation is about Jesus Christ. So if you're asking yourself the question, "Why would we study the book of revelation?" Because here's the answer: 'Cause you're gonna learn more about Jesus Christ from this book than you have already learned in the other parts of scripture. Would you like to learn more about Jesus Christ? If the answer's yes, you will enjoy the book of revelation. It's the apocalypse, it's the unveiling, it's the disclosure about more of who Jesus Christ is that hasn't already been revealed. So if you love

Jesus and want to know him more, this is the revelation of Jesus Christ. And notice what he says: "Which God gave him to show his bondservants "the things which must soon take place. "And he sent it and communicated it by his angel "to his bondservant, John." Now twice in that text, you see the word bondservant the Greek word is doulos, it means it literally means slave. We don't translate it as slave because of some of the horrible things that have happened, even in our nation. And so we use the word servant, or bondservant. And a bondservant's closer because a bond servant is choosing to be a slave, but here's the truth: we're slaves of the King. Servants get a choice in the matter. What you're gonna see in this book as we unfold it is that Jesus Christ is King, we're his slaves. Jesus Christ is in charge of everything that has happened, is happening, and will happen, we're slaves. We're not telling him what to do, he's telling us what's going on, and how we're called to respond. John is his slave, John is his bondservant. John is the one that's getting the message. And how is he getting the message? Jesus is sending John the message through one of his angels to him, who's communicating it to John. So here's where we get the revelation. It's coming directly from Jesus, and it's about Jesus. This is sitting down with Jesus, getting more disclosure, full disclosure. It would be like a one-on-one interview with him saying, "Jesus, tell me more about yourself. "Tell me more about what you've done. "Tell me more about what you're gonna do. "I just want to hear." And Jesus is like, "Okay, this is coming from me, and it's about me. "I'm sending it through the angel "to my servant, or slave John, "and he's going to communicate "everything that I'm telling him "so that you as the church can know what I want you to know. "I'm gonna unveil



some things, "I'm gonna disclose some things "which you don't already know." Here's something else that I would say about this book. This book is apocalyptic in genre, which means there's a ton of symbolism. It's highly symbolic. That doesn't change the way we read the word. There are gonna be times that we read this book, and you're going to see some symbolism, and then it's going to be revealed what those symbols mean. And other times we're not gonna know what those symbols mean, and so based upon other texts, we're gonna make our best guess as to what that looks like. I will try to tell you where here specific, Jesus saying this is what it is, other times, here's where I'm putting this together, and where I'm landing on what we do. It doesn't change the fact that we can read God's word and understand it. God gave us his word so you can understand it. You don't need to have five PhDs to study the book of revelation and understand it. And I know for me for several years, almost two or three decades, I would listen to people talk about this book, And I would leave thinking, I don't see that anywhere in my Bible. I don't see any of the stuff that you're talking about, but that's really cool. That's really fanciful. Here's the other thing I would say to you: all of us have in our body what's called embedded theology. Embedded theology means this: All of us have convictions and beliefs about different doctrines that we hold because of who we spend our time with, who has taught us, and what we think that we know. Here's what I'm telling you to do with that, we all have it based upon whether you grew up in the church or out of the church, or what tradition you were, you have understanding, okay. Many of you, and really in the last 150 years, and there's been a certain theology that has been proposed. If you've read the Left Behind books and

series, you have embedded theology. You think, here's the way it's going to happen. I'm asking you to put all that on hold, let God's word speak to us, and then see if that's really where you land, or if you don't land. And it's okay. And that's what we need to get to. Here's the other part, it's the revelation of whom?

- [Man] Jesus Christ.

- Say it really loud, 'cause,

- [Congregation] Jesus Christ.

- It's a revelation of Jesus Christ. Now, when we talk about the doctrines, or the teachings, or the understanding of Jesus Christ, we're talking about Christology, the study of Christ. When we talk about eschatology, eschatos means the last things. And we're talking about that, we're talking about the study of the end times. When we talk about theology, it comes from theos, which is God. So it's the study of God. Here's what I would say to you. If your Christology is not greater than your eschatology, you have poor theology. Meaning, if you're more excited about charts and graphs than you are about Jesus Christ, you have bad theology. I remember sitting in seminary one time, and I would take these classes that I was going to take, and I would have certain professors that would talk about our opponents' belief. Well who are our opponents? The people that believe differently than us. Like they're not our opponents. Satan and hell are our enemies. Death is our enemy. Other Christians are not our enemies, they're not our opponents. You understand what I'm saying? This is a book revealing Jesus. If you love Jesus, you're going to love this book, right. So why are we studying

this? Because this is an unveiling of more of Jesus. If you love the gospels, you're going to love the book of Revelation. Like this is where we're getting to. And so the reason that we need to study this is because it's scripture, God's put it in there, and let's talk about end times for just a second. Are we in the end times? People talk about all the time, it's the end time, we're in the end times, we're in the end times. Well, let's just talk about what the end times are. Let's set a framework for that so we understand what we're talking about. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, was buried, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, the end times clock started, okay. It ends at his second coming. Are we in the end times?

- Yes.

- Yes. We're getting closer and closer and closer and closer. Now some people will say, "Well, that's what they've said for hundreds of years. "That's what they've said for thousands of years. "How can you be so sure?" Well, let me just read some of the texts in the New Testament, you tell me if you're seeing some of these things. Keep in mind, we started in Genesis where we saw God created everything in the universe out of nothing, and a little over 4,000 years later, Jesus Christ became incarnate. And he said he was coming soon. And then guess what? 2000 years have passed. Is he coming soon? I think he is. I think he is. But just listen to this, you decide for yourself what times we're living in. In Second Timothy chapter three verses one through five, it talks about what the end times will look like. See if you've ever seen any of these things in our day. "But realize this, that in the last days, "difficult times will come. "For men will be lovers of themselves, "lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers,

"disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, "unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, "without self-control, brutal, haters of good, "treacherous, reckless, conceited, "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, "holding a form of godliness "although they have denied its power. "Avoid such men as these." Do you see any of those things? That's just front page headlines no matter what newspaper you're reading right now. Like we are living there. And what the book of Revelation will do is it will create an urgency for you, you'll see this. That's one of the reasons that we're gonna read it. But first and foremost, the reason that we're studying this is scripture. This is God's living and active word. Jesus is the embodiment of his living and active word, and he wants to reveal more about himself. So if you love Jesus, and you want to know more about Jesus, this is scripture saying I'm gonna tell you more about who Jesus is. That's why we must study this book. Secondly, why teach revelation? Because it creates an urgency, and a sobering choice to live completely for Christ. This book will create an urgency, and a sobering choice to live completely for Christ. After Jesus tells us how John received the message through his angel, what did John do? "Who testified to the word of God, "and to the testimony of Jesus, even to all that he saw." Well, what's the word of God? What's the word of God? The word of God is his written word, right, the scriptures. The word of God is also the logos, the living word of God. Jesus said he was the embodiment of all of the scriptures. What was John testifying to? That the word of God, every bit of it, is true. What else was he testifying to? The testimony of Jesus. What's the testimony of Jesus? The testimony of Jesus is that he's the only God of the universe who became incarnate flesh, who died on the cross for the sins of

humanity, who rose from the dead, and he's the only way to God the Father, and he's coming back to judge the world, both the living and the dead. That's the testimony of Jesus. Everything Jesus did and taught as the testimony of Jesus. So let's talk about the word testify. What's it mean to testify? If you testify in court, you're talking about what you saw. The Greek word testify mean something far more than that. The Greek word is, martureo, it's where you get the word to bear witness to. It means that John lived his life in such a way that everybody that knew him said, "This man believes that the word of God is true, "and this man believes that everything "that Jesus Christ said and did is true, "and he's living his entire life "banked upon those two truths." Can I just tell you there's nothing else to bank your life on? Bank your life on the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus, and there's an awesome return on investment. But he bore witness to. So for you to say, I'm bearing witness, here would be the understanding. The understanding would be this: If people that know you, Christian and not, would there be enough evidence in your life to convict you if you were on trial to say that you bear witness to the fact that the word of God is true, and that you bear witness to the fact that Jesus Christ's testimony is true. Would you be convicted? How long would the trial take? Would you have to call extra witnesses to really prove and have character, or when people put you on trial and be like, this is an open and shut case. John bore witness to the fact. We have of the other apostles that survived, Judas Iscariot hung himself, of the other apostles that survived, all of them according to church history were martyred, except for one, John. This book was written in about 95 A.D. at a time where there was extreme persecution towards Christians. And John has been banned

to the Island of Patmos. Why? Because government officials no longer wanted to hear a man who bore witness and testified to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. And because he did, instead of killing him, they sent him away so he couldn't tell anybody else. And God said, I'll use that. I'll have you write a book and unveil even more about Jesus so that every generation of the church from now on can hear about who he is. Can you believe a government that was that totalitarian enough that didn't want to hear about the word of God and the testimony of Jesus? If you don't, you're gonna see one real soon. It's coming. I've been telling you this for years, wake up, right. There's an urgency to this message. This is not just written in John's day. Now I wouldn't say this exegetically. I believe that when scripture is written, what it meant is what it means. What it meant for John is what it means for us. If I'm teaching it here, it needs to be true in every place in the world. If I'm teaching it here, it means if I go to Chennai, India, what I'm teaching will be true. It means if I go to Tel Aviv, Israel it means what I'm teaching is true. I don't need to change my words because of culture, the word of God can speak. John's giving his life for the testimony of Jesus and the word of God. Now why is this so important? Can I just tell you why? Because in America, we have a weak, westernized, watered down version of the gospel that has elements of truth, but we don't tell people the whole truth. We don't. Okay. So what we tell people, because the question most people ask is this: "What's the least I can possibly do, "and still get into heaven?" And then we tell them, "Well, if you just believe that Jesus died on the cross, "You'll go." "Great, I believe it. "Now I'm gonna go live my sinful life "any way that I wanted." Can I just tell you there's nowhere in the Bible that

says that's salvific. All right, you've been tricked. Jesus' called to salvation was this: "If anyone would come after me, he must," what? Deny himself. So if you're gonna follow me, it's not about you, must take up his cross, which means you die to your ideas, and you're gonna follow me, which means I'm the King and you're the slave. Like that's entrance into the kingdom. Like that's not like, well, maybe someday I'll get to that. That's entrance, according to Jesus. Right? And when you read through the New Testament apostles, and when you read through the things that they were saying, what did Paul say? Galatians 2:20. "I have been crucified with Christ." What's that mean? I've died to myself. It's no longer I who live, it's Christ who lives in me, the life I live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. I'm dead. Right. What about Colossians three, verses three and four? Says that he's, I'll read it to you. Colossians three, three and four, "For you have died, "and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. "When Christ, who is your life appears, "then you'll appear with him in glory." That's why Paul was able to say in Philippians 1:21, "For me to live as Christ, to die is gain." Why? Because I've already died. I've died to my ideas, I've died to my allegiance. I've died so that I can serve Christ fully, and I'm following him. If you live that way, that's the gospel. The gospel is not what little you can do and still get in, or how can God bless me and give me stuff that I want so I can live my best life now. That has nothing to do with biblical teaching. Biblical teaching is, "are you going all in with me?" Now here's what I'll say to you. When you read this, here's where you gonna feel the urgency, and here's where you're gonna feel the sobering, okay. This book, when you read it, and whether you re read it in 151 A.D., whether you

read it in 508 A.D., whether you read it in 1350 A.D. in the Middle Ages, whether you read it today, it's gonna create an urgency, and here's what this book's gonna do. It's gonna comfort the troubled, and it's gonna trouble the comforted. That's what this book does. If you're living for Jesus, you're gonna experience difficulties in this world. The Bible says in Second Timothy that anyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. You go all in on the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, and you start living it, and proclaiming it, and doing it, you will have opposition to what you do. That's a promise. This book will bring you great comfort when you do. If you're living your life completely for yourself thinking that you're saved, this book is gonna trouble you to death. And some of you, you need to be troubled. Because some of you that come to Brave Church, some of you that tune in online, you're not saved. You falsely think that you are because you're a good person, or you've done some things, or you felt God's presence around you. When you read this book, you are gonna be troubled because when you see the glory of God and all that he is coming, and the picture of what's happening, you're gonna realize, I'm not ready for him. I'm not ready for that. And this is gonna give you the opportunity to get ready. It's gonna create an urgency, and a sobering about Jesus Christ and how you're going to respond to him. I need to say this to pastors, I have to say this. These two things, the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ. That's paramount for everybody in the church. That's paramount for the church. Can I just say this to pastors and future pastors? For Christ's sake, would you preach the word, and live the testimony of Jesus? Can you do that? Listen, if you're not gonna preach the word of God, and live for the testimony of



Jesus, what else do you have to offer? It's not about being hip, it's not about being cool, it's not about any of that stuff. It's about the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. And that's what I say to every pastor. All your future pastors, make it about the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. It's the only thing that matters. Secondly, for all of you that aren't pastors, would you please let your life bear witness to the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus. Would you please, for Christ's sake, live your lives in such a way at Brave Church, that people that see you here and outside of here would say, "He or she are living for the glory of God, "there's no doubt about it. "I may thoroughly disagree with her, "I may thoroughly disagree with him, doesn't matter. "I can't change them from believing "in the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ." But that's why we're studying this book, right? I mean, if we want to learn about Jesus, that's one thing. But we're called to go all in with Jesus. See this book is gonna read you into the book. There's no sidelines. There's no grand standing. For those of you want to stand outside and watch this, you're gonna be troubled at your core. You're gonna be bothered. See, if you came to study Revelation so you could sit in the stand, and make a chart, and graph it all out, and tell people how smart you are, you missed the whole point of the book. We're not writing the book. Because when you get to heaven, it's not like you're gonna bring your chart to Jesus and say, "Look what I did." What God wants from you is say, yeah, but what about my word, and what about my testimony, and how come you didn't live for that? That's the purpose of the book. So we want to live in such a way where we're stirred by God, where we're stirred by him. And by the way, none of us have arrived, so all of us should be stirred by him at

some point. I mean, if you can hear the word of God every single week when it's being faithfully proclaimed and you're like, "Got that, I always do what God wants." You have no self-awareness whatsoever. Right? I would even tell you as I'm reading through this book, and I'm studying it a fresh this week, and God's able to speak deeply to me. All right? And so I'm just encouraging you again, just humble yourself. Jesus said of all the people born of woman, there's none that has been better, or greater than John the Baptist. And yet John the Baptist said what? "I'm not even worthy to untie the thong of his sandal. "He must increase, but I must decrease." Would you let Jesus increase in your life during this series? Would you decrease? He testified to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus. I mean, if it was just these two reasons, it's good enough. It's scripture, it's gonna reveal more of Jesus, it's gonna create an urgency, and a sobering in my life to live completely for him. And what else? Third reason, why should we study revelation? Why teach revelation? Because blessing is promised to the reader, hearer, and doer. You want to be blessed? You want more blessing in your life? You want more of God's favor? This book makes a promise that blessing is promised to the reader. There's no other book in the Bible that promises blessing to the reader, notice what he says: "Blessed is he who reads, "and those who hear the words of the prophecy, "and heed the things which are written in it, "for the time is near. Blessed. Now this is the first of seven blessings you're gonna see in the book of revelation. Seven is the number of completeness, we'll talk about that in a minute. So this is the perfect blessing, this is the first of them. We read the beatitudes in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Blessed are the meek, blessed are the poor in spirit, and so on

and so forth. Blessed are you when people insult you, and persecute you because of my name. When we read blessed, blessed means what it says it means. It means happy are you when, favored are you when, blessed are you when. We would think, if we as Americans when we go to church, we would think that the beatitudes would read something like this: "Blessed are you when you get a promotion, "blessed are you when you get married, "blessed are you when you have kids, "blessed are you and everybody speaks well of you. "Blessed are you when you have plenty of money in the bank. "Blessed are you when you have more time for golf. "Blessed are you when all your friends love you, "blessed are you when everybody speaks highly." That's what we'd say blessing is. Jesus says just the opposite. All the blessed things he says are not things that would come natural to us, but only spirit-filled men and women can do. Here's what you see in this prophecy: "Blessed are you when you hear this, "blessed are you when you preach this, read this, "blessed are you when you heed this," that means you take it to heart. That means the book of Revelation is not a passive book, it's gonna cause you to act. It's gonna cause you to do something. To read the book of Revelation and just study ideas, or study graphs, or study charts, is to miss the entire point of the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation is causing you to respond to Jesus' prodding or pleading in your life to make some changes by faith for what he's going to show you. And what's he say about this book? We talked about the fact that the genre was apocalyptic, but notice, "blessed are those who read, "and those who hear the words of the" what? The prophecy. Prophecy are things that haven't happened yet. And I want to let you know, there's four main ways that you can read

this book, you probably need to be aware of them. We'll talk about some of these other things. And for those of you that want to know big words, and like, you know, dispensationalism, and pre-millennialism, and all, we'll get to all that, you'll know what they are, but they're not that big of a deal. But there's four ways to really understand this book. One is the preterist just understanding. The preterist understanding is this book was written earlier than 95 A.D., which there's not a lot of evidence for. And that all of the book is complete history. That any prophecy that was in that book was literally fulfilled. Some call it even *ex eventu* prophecy, where what we're reading about are things that have already happened, and we're just talking about it. Very few people hold to that position, just so you know. Oftentimes, critical scholars at seminary hold to that position so that they can diffuse the Bible. There are some born again believers that hold to that position, I would not be one of them. I don't think a good scrutiny and exegesis will uphold that. Second is a historicist position. Historicist position. The historicist position was pretty much propagated in the Middle Ages. It represents a history of the church, that the entire book of Revelation is really just an unfolding of all human history. So for instance, when we start studying this stuff in churches, the first church, Ephesus, was really the first few years of the church. And by the time we get to Laodicea, that's the end time. And so we're arbitrarily deciding where to put things into history. The challenge for that is, whoever's reading the book gets to decide wherever they want to put these different things, and I think that's difficult to do as well. There's an idealist position. The idealist position is that the book of Revelation is just simply about good triumphing over evil, and God wins over Satan, and no matter

what generation you're in, that works. And there is some truth to that, but I just can't get away from that word prophecy. I can't get away from when I read the book of Revelation that I haven't seen all the things unfold that I'm reading about in this book, which is the fourth position, which is what I am, just so you know where I'm coming from, it's a futurist position. A majority of the people that you have read or know in this generation would likely hold to that position. But it's a belief that there are prophetic things on God's calendar, which have not happened yet, which are going to happen, and blessed are you when you read them, and hear them, and take heed for those things that are coming. When you are ready for all that God is going to unfold. And I believe that there are some things in the book of Revelation that have been fulfilled, that have happened, but there are many and most of those things which are yet to come. And here's what you see. That blessing is promised to the reader. So I'm encouraging you when we go through the series, don't just hear it. Don't just read it, take heed to it. Now I'd encourage you too, now that you are gonna have your own Bible, read the entire book of Revelation in one sitting. If you're not a good reader, it's okay. You can go to an audio Bible and get one, it'll take you just a little over an hour to listen to the whole book. If you're a faster reader, you could probably do it in 30 minutes or less. But when you see the whole of Revelation unfold, it's gonna give you a better picture, and put things into perspective. If you've never read the book before, you're gonna be thoroughly confused the first time you read it, I promise you. All right, it's okay. But the more you put in the time to study God's word, the more that God is going to show you. My professor at Dallas Seminary, Howard Hendricks, he used to

say, "God does not yield his fruit to the lazy." Okay. I've also heard it said that raking leaves is easier than mining for gold, or digging for diamonds. We're gonna dig deep, we're gonna mine for gold in this text. We want to understand what God is promising to us, the blessing that he's promised to us, so that we as the reader, and the hearer, and the doer, can do this. I mean, this is no different than what we read about in the new Testament in James, the half-brother of Jesus. In James chapter one verses 22 and following he says, "But prove yourselves to be doers of the word, "not merely hearers who delude themselves. "For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, "he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror. "For once he has looked at himself and gone away, "he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was." And we've all had that experience. We go to church, God speaks to us, we know what we ought to do, and we don't do it. Every single one of us has gone through that. Here's what he's saying. When you read the book of Revelation, don't do that. In the way in which God speaks to you, take action, take heed to what he's saying. Understand what's coming, and how you need to prepare for his return. These are good reasons to study this book. I'm compelled by them. The fourth reason is this. Why teach Revelation? Because the gospel is paramount, and central throughout the book. The gospel of Jesus Christ is paramount, and central throughout the book. And notice who John addresses: "John to the seven churches." Who's the book for it's for? It's for the church. We're gonna read about seven specific churches in the book of Revelation. He said to the seven churches that are in Asia, that would be modern day Turkey right now, we'll take a look at those in the coming weeks. "Grace and peace to

you from him who is, "and who was, and who is to come." Now does that seem a little backwards to you? I thought it was was, and is, and is to come. Why does he say is and was, and is to come? I mean, doesn't that seem a little bit out of order? I mean, maybe John made a mistake. How many mistakes are there in your Bible, do you any of you know? Hey, there's zero mistakes. There's no typos, there's no correction. Why does he say "who is, and who was, and who is to come"? Here's why, because the God of the universe is present with us now. God is alive. He's the God who is. He's the God who is in your life, He's the God who is working in your life, he's the God who is revealing himself, he's the God who is. What else is he? He's the God who was. We started in Genesis 1:1, the most difficult verse to believe in all the Bible. That in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. That out of nothing, God formed the entire universe in six literal days. He's the God who was, and guess what? That God transcended all time and space before the world was even created. He's the God who is, he's the God who was, guess what else he is? He's the God who is to come. Well, how come the world's so crazy right now? And how come it's just like this? Is it ever gonna get any better? Oh yeah, he's coming back soon. That's what you see. And do you hear the urgency of the language that we've read today throughout the text? To testify to his servant, John what much soon take place, which are written for the time is near. Friends, he's coming, and he's coming soon. I mean, wouldn't it be cool if he came like, one day when we were all in church together? I mean we just all go up together and it was like, so cool. I mean, with all these billions of people here, I mean, I was never gonna find my wife or my kids, and now they're right here with me. I mean,

isn't that awesome? Like he's coming, he's going to make everything right. He's coming, he's still the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords. He's coming, you don't need to worry about what's going on in the world. You need to be aware of it, but you should have more awareness of what's happening. It tells you to get your eyes off the world, and put your eyes on Jesus Christ. That's what he's saying. Now here's the gospel. Who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne. Seven spirits. I see nothing else in my Bible all throughout biblical literature that tells me there's seven spirits around his throne. You need to understand something. The number seven is the number of completeness or perfectness. So when we read about the seven churches, there were seven literal churches, but I believe he's also talking about the complete, perfect church. And what we're gonna see is as God talks to these specific seven churches, we're gonna learn things about us and our church for what God gives commendation to, and what he says is really good, and condemnation to, and what he says is really bad. So as we study these specific seven churches, we're gonna see the seven churches, the perfect church, to see what does God value in the church. And we'll be able to measure ourselves, Brave Church, against it. Is Brave Church a good church? 17 of you think so. All right, cool, thanks. Is Brave a good church? Thank you. But what we want to do is look at the scriptures because it doesn't mean we're a perfect church, 'cause we're filled with sinners. So there's some things that we need to be stimulated in that we can get better at, right? There's some things we're doing well, there's some things we can grow in, right? And so that's the seven churches. When you see the seven spirits, it's talking about the



perfect spirit, the complete spirit, perhaps the Holy Spirit before the throne. I see that all throughout the Bible. So I'm taking the seven there to mean the Holy Spirit before the throne of God. And the reason I take it that way too, is because here we have from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, that's God the father, and then you have the Holy spirit, the seven spirits who are before his throne in the beginning of verse five, and from Jesus Christ. What do you see there? You see our Trinity God. Unlike anyone else ever. You have one essence of God made up of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The father is not the son and the spirit, and the son is not the father and the spirit, And the spirit is not the father and the son, but they are all of one essence. And what do you see? You see them right there, all around the throne. The one who is, and who was, and who is to come with the Holy spirit and Jesus Christ. And they are all in community together as they always have been, right. And when we see this, we see that the gospel is paramount and central throughout the book. So where do you see that? I see it from Jesus Christ. How does the book start off talking about Jesus Christ? The faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the Kings of the earth, to him who loves us, and released us from our sins. How? By his blood. Is that not the gospel, or what? Let's start there and we'll work our way backwards. Jesus Christ is the only one that can forgive you of your sins. Jesus Christ is the only one that can make your dead life alive. Jesus Christ is the only one that can present you to the father, God. There is no other way. And it's only through his blood. To reject Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection is to reject God. There are no other gods. He is the King of Kings, he is the Lord of Lords. He is the one who sets us free, not only

from the penalty of our sin, but from the power of our sin. And ultimately from the presence of our sin. He is God. He is the only way. And that is the only way that you can know Christ, is through the gospel. That's the gospel. Which means if you're here today, and you've never turned from your sins and turned to Christ, you can call yourself whatever you want, you're just not a Christian. A Christian who is one who's turned from his or her sin, and turn to Christ, and by grace received everything that God has for you. Not by anything you've ever done, but all by his grace because of his sovereign mercy in your life. That's the gospel. Who's Jesus? He's the only one that can set you free from your sin. He's the only one that can deliver you from the judgment that's coming. He's the only one that can present you faultless before the father, and there are no other gods. What else is he? He's the ruler of the kings of the earth. None of you moved. Okay. He's the ruler of the kings of the earth. We live in a day and age where people are living fearful based upon who's in office. I got something to tell you today. It don't matter who's in office, Jesus Christ is ruler over them. Amen? And you need to know that. You need to know that, because Jesus is part of a monarchy. He's not part, he's not an elected official. And when he comes back and establishes his kingdom, there is no voting. Some people are all concerned about voting. Remember people talking about these dominion voting systems, and they're wrong and this and that. I don't know any facts. Here's what I do know, I know my Bible. Can you take a look at verse six? "And he made us to be a kingdom of priests "to his God and Father, to him be the glory and the" what? "Dominion forever and ever, amen." Jesus said, I don't know much about your dominion systems, but I

know this: when I get back there ain't no vote, 'cause I have dominion over everything. Amen? He rules the kings of the earth. He says, get your eyes off elected officials, and put your eyes on me. I'm in charge. I'm coming soon. The end is near. Be ready for me. That's what he's saying, right? He's the one who's freed us, he's the one who's over the kings of the earth. Let's continue to make our way back through the text. He's the first born of the dead. Now cult movements will oftentimes use verses like that to say, "See, he wasn't God, he was first born. "He was born." Jesus was born in the Virgin Mary. He's homoousian, or of the same essence as his father. The father is eternal, he can beget that which is eternal. Jesus Christ was never created, he was, became incarnate. He's always existed. What does it mean he was the first born of the dead? Well, here's what it means. Firstborn simply means this: preeminence. Means he has all preeminence. And how was he the first born of the dead? Because he's the first one to ever die and rise from the dead who is still alive. He's the first fruit of all that. It shows that all authority and dominion and rule is his. That's what it means. We see this all throughout the scripture. God refers to Israel as his first born, even though it wasn't the first nation. God refers to David as his firstborn, even though he wasn't the only child. Firstborn is rank and prominence of order. Jesus Christ is first in rank. He rose from the dead to validate that he is the eternal son of God so that anybody who believes in him will not taste death either, that's what it means. And even in the book of Colossians, when we read about how they created everything in the universe, and that nothing was created without him, and that he's before all things, verse 18 of Colossians chapter one says he's also the head of the body of the church, and he is the beginning,

the first born from the dead. He has first rank and preeminence in everything. It doesn't mean that he was created. Jesus Christ was not created. God can't be created. He's always been God. That's who he is. He released us from our sins, he's the ruler of the Kings of the earth. He's the first born of the dead. And what is he? He he's the faithful witness. It means if you can't trust anybody else in this world, guess who you can trust. You can trust Jesus Christ's testimony and his word. When he says I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the father, except through me, you can trust that. You say, well, how can I trust Jesus? Here's what Jesus said in John 8:14 Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I testify about myself, my testimony is true "for I know where I came from, and I know where I'm going. "But you do not know where I came from, "or where I am going." What was he saying? Anything I say is true. You can bank on it. He's the faithful witness, the first born from the dead. He's the ruler of the kings of the earth. He released us from all our sins, and what did he do? The gospel is not just freeing you from sin so you can go to heaven. The gospel is teaching you how to serve the Lord Jesus Christ while you're here. He made us to be a kingdom of priests to his God and father. What do priests do? Priests minister to the Lord, priests serve the Lord, priests bring other people to serve the Lord, that's their job. What are you called to do? Some people have a problem in life like, what's my calling? What am I gonna do? How am I gonna do it? What's my? Here's one of them. You're gonna minister unto the Lord with everything you have. And Jesus Christ is gonna be the foundation of your life. And then you're gonna serve other people, and bring them in to serve the Lord as well. That's how God establishes his kingdom. We are all set up

to be a kingdom of priests unto our God. We're a chosen nation, a royal priesthood, right. That's what we're called to do. We're called to be that royal priesthood that ministers and serves to the Lord out of the overflow of our life, and calls other people to serve him as well. That's why the gospel is paramount, it's central throughout this whole book. And then all glory and dominion are his forever and ever, amen. That means Jesus Christ is in control of all things. While you see this world spinning out of control, and I'll be honest, I mean, in my lifetime, I haven't seen some of the things that I'm seeing even this week in our culture, I just haven't seen 'em. And if I focused on 'em, I know it can cause fear in my heart. And if I thought about 'em, and I thought about it, this is where we're going, it would cause anxiety unless my eyes are on the Lord Jesus, where he says, "I got all this. "I'm the faithful witness, I'm the first born from the dead, "I'm the ruler of all the kings of the earth. "And you can bank on me because I'm telling you the truth, "that when I come back, I will establish dominion "forever and ever to which we say, Amen." Come Lord Jesus, amen. That's what it's about. And so when we see this, the gospel's paramount and central throughout the book. Now you're gonna watch as we go through, and you can make decisions as to where you place things, and time things, and how it works. But there are gonna be a number of people even when the gospel's proclaimed, that are gonna say, "We want nothing to do with you, God." There's gonna be scores of people that do that. There's gonna be a massive apostasy from the church that many people that have been part of a local church and in the church and doing things in the church, but weren't actually saved, they're gonna depart from the faith, we're gonna see all that. That doesn't

change the gospel. And the gospel doesn't change either with the fact that God has a righteous judge, and he's coming to judge sin. He's coming to judge both the living and the dead. That's a good God. Because if God saw all the injustice in the world and just said, "Oh, I'm sorry." Then we could ask this question. "God, how could you be good and allow that to happen?" But we'll never be able to ask that question, because God answers it. He's gonna establish his kingdom in justice, and in righteousness, and truth. And he's gonna punish all injustice. And because all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, it's the reason we must repent and be ready for his coming so he doesn't hold us accountable. And he loved us enough so that we wouldn't have to. I mean, if those were just the reasons, if we just had four I would say, "God, that's enough, okay, I'm in, "I'm in on this study, let's let's do this thing." How many of us so far in on this study? You wanna do this? All right. But let's do one final one. Why teach Revelation? Because Jesus Christ's coming is certain, and all his attributes will be on full display. You can take this to the bank. There are people in every generation, "Where's his coming, it's been thousands of years, where's," I'm telling you, he's coming. The word of God teaches he's coming, and he's coming soon. Notice what he says, "Behold, he is coming with the clouds. "And every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, "and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him." Now I want to set this up for you. The longer you study the Bible, and the more Old Testament you understand, the more New Testament you understand, the more you're gonna see how it fits into the book of Revelation. So you have to understand, two Old Testament verses are being used here. The first is Daniel chapter seven and verse 13. We won't

spend a lot of time there today, we'll get to Daniel as we go through our study. But notice what it says in Daniel 7:13, "I kept looking in night visions and behold, "with the clouds of heaven, one like a son of man "was coming, and he came up to the ancient of days." One like the son of man coming is the Lord Jesus Christ. And he came up to the ancient of days, that's his father, right? So Daniel had a vision of what this was going to be like. Now, why is this such a big deal? Because sometimes in our New Testament, we read about Jesus Christ being the son of God, and the son of man. And we think son of God, okay, he's God, but son of man, he's human. That's not what son of man means. Son of man means what Daniel seven said, the son of man is the God-man Messiah. The son of man is the one who's going to rule and reign. This will give you context at the end of Mark's gospel, when Jesus was being tried by the high priest and he keeps asking him this same question over and over, you know, are you the son of God? Are you the son of God? Are you the son of God? And Jesus looks at him. He could have just said yes, but he kept silent and did not answer. Again, the high priest questioned him and saying to him, "Are you the Christ, the son of the living God, "the blessed one, are you the one "that we're supposed to be looking for?" And Jesus said in Mark 14:62, "I am." Have we heard that before? I've always been, and I will always be, and I'm standing right here in front of you now, I am. "And you shall see the son of man "sitting at the right hand of power, "and coming with the clouds of heaven." What's he quoting? He's quoting Daniel 7:13. He's saying this, "You're asking me if I'm the son of man? "You're asking me if I'm God in flesh? I am. "And by the way, the next time you see me, "I'll be fulfilling the prophecy of Daniel seven, "and you will see me and

know that I'm the God of the universe, 'cause I'll be coming to judge you. At that point, the priest tears his robe, and the crucifixion scene begins. Why? Because Jesus Christ was calling himself the son of man, which meant that he was God. Now this is one of those places in the texts I want you to wrestle with, okay? I want you to wrestle with this, but notice what the text says, "Behold, he is coming in the clouds, "and every eye will see him." How many eyes is that?

- Hey, you didn't listen, I'm gonna ask the question again, I want a full participation, it's not rhetorical. "Behold, he's coming in the clouds, "and every eye will see him." How many eyes is that?

- [Congregation] All.

- Who's not gonna see him?

- [Congregation] No one.

- According to the Bible, every eye will see him. Now just wrestle with that over the course of the next series of weeks. Even those who have pierced him. Now, we don't have further revelation on the people that drove nails into Jesus' hands and feet as to whether they repented and trusted Christ at some point in time. If they didn't, they're certainly in hell. But you get this picture that even people in hell are gonna see Jesus when he comes. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him. Now, how many is all? That's everyone. That's every people, tongue, and nation. They're gonna see him, and those who don't know him are going to mourn over him. That's a reference to Zechariah 12:10, in the second part of the verse, "So that they will look on



me, whom they have pierced. "And they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only son. "And they will weep bitterly over him "like the bitter weeping of a firstborn." What's gonna happen when Jesus Christ returns? Every single person in the world that has ever breathed a breath will see him. Everyone. All of them. And those who haven't trusted Christ are gonna weep, and they're gonna lament. And if you haven't trusted Christ, you're gonna weep. And you're gonna lament, because you're gonna realize that that pastor that preached the word of God, when you read the word of God, when your mom told you about the word of God, when your friend told you about the word of God, that they were telling you the truth. And at that point in time it's gonna be too late. Now I'm challenging you, and again, just, you have time to look up the verse. I'm challenging you to find the verse in the Bible where there's a secret and silent rapture of pulling away of the saints. There's not one verse in the Bible that talks about a secret and silent rapture. The only problem I have with a secret and silent rapture is that everything I read about in the Bible, it's not secret nor silent. Everybody's gonna see him. First Thessalonians 4:17 says there's gonna be a cry of an arch angel, and a shout of command. And all the dead in Christ are gonna rise, and everybody who's believing in him are gonna be caught up in the air to be with Jesus forever, and only Kirk Cameron's gonna see it. I can't find that in my Bible. Every eye's gonna see him. His second coming's not secret. His second coming is to put himself on display with all of his attributes, his glory, his power, his might his honor, and blessing is gonna be all his, amen. I don't see what some people see. Now I can be wrong. I'm not, but I could be. No I'm, I'm open. But I'm just telling you, "Behold he's coming in the clouds, every

eye will see him, "even those who pierced him, "and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him." So it is to be, amen.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- When he comes back, I mean, some of you probably had this question, 'cause if you grew up in an evangelical church, and you walked home sometime, or you went to a football game, or you went to a meeting and nobody was there and like, "Oh, did I miss the rapture? Did I miss the rapture?" Nobody's missing the rapture, y'all. Every eye will see him. Every eye around the globe will see the Lord Jesus Christ. We'll talk more about the rapture as we get further in this, and talk about different positions. And then here's what Jesus said: "I am the Alpha and the Omega says the Lord. "Who is, says the Lord, God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come. "The almighty. "That's who I am." That's who he is. His coming is certain, and his attributes will be on full display. Now, why does he talk about the Alpha and Omega? in our English alphabet, we have 26 letters, A to Z. In the Greek alphabet, they had 24 letters, Alpha to Omega. It went something like this, Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, Epsilon, Zeta, Eta, Theta, Iota, Kappa, Lambda, Mu, Nu, Xi, Omicron, Pi, Rho Sigma, Tau, Upsilon, Phi, Chi, Psi, Omega, right. Those are the 24 letters in the Greek alphabet. He's saying, "I'm the beginning, I'm the one that started all this." He's saying, "I'm the end, "I'm the one that's gonna bring it to a finish." I was watching a movie recently, I can't remember what movie it was, but it was something like this. You've seen movies like this, where somebody said, "That guy started it, I'm gonna finish it." And I remember watching that thinking, I don't know what's about to happen, but it's gonna be good. Here's what

Jesus said. "Nobody else started it, I started it. "And I'm about to finish it." And the reason we need to be ready is because Jesus Christ is coming back to a city near you, and you need to be ready because when he comes, every eye will see him. And if you're not ready for him, you will lament and mourn and recognize, I didn't place my faith in the one that I should have. That's what the Bible teaches. That's what the text says. So Jesus is coming, it's certain. That's why we lament some of the things that go on in our culture. There's always gonna be challenges in our culture. There's always gonna be things that go on. But as Paul said in Philippians chapter three, verses 20 and 21, "But our citizenship is in heaven, "and we eagerly await a savior, the Lord, Jesus Christ. "Come, Lord Jesus." I mean, these are five reasons why God spells out that this would be a good book for us to spend time in. Not only to read it, but to hear it, and to grow in it. This is not rhetorical. Who here by hearing all these five reasons would say, "I'm in, I want to do this." Right? This is gonna be a great book. We're gonna have a great time. We're gonna learn more about Jesus, and who he really is, and what he looks like. We're gonna learn more about his love for the church, and why you want to be part of a good one. We're gonna learn more about worship. We're gonna learn more about his judgements. We're gonna learn more about what's coming for us who are believers, and all the blessings that are to come. It's so fascinating that God would take the time to pen this book so that we could thoroughly know him, and all that he wants to do. And it's a beautiful thing. So I believe that the best way to start our series, to talk about our faithful witness and the ruler over all the kings of the earth, and the one that freed us by his blood would be to share communion together. And be

reminded that it's his blood that brings us. Because for some of you, you may be here today and say, "I've never trusted Christ. "If he came back today, I'm in big peril, I'm in trouble." Hey, good news for you today, you're still alive. And Jesus Christ loves you with an unconditional love, and he wants you to be his, and he wants you to be part of his family, and you can turn to him right now and give your life to him. So as you're holding that communion cup in your hand, just hang on to that. I'll come back up and we will take that momentarily. But for right now, let me just pray over you. Lord Jesus, we thank you for your word. Lord Jesus, we thank you for who you are. Lord Jesus, we thank you that you're a God who loves us. And Lord, before we even celebrate communion, we want to make it possible because you said anybody can come to the table that believes in you. If you've never placed your faith and trust in Jesus, you know, you may be a church goer, you may be religious, you may be a good person, you may know you're an awful person. Makes no difference, Jesus came for you. If you want a relationship with the God of the universe, you can pray like this: Dear Jesus, I know for fact, I'm a sinner, and that I'm separated from you. But I believe that you died on the cross for my sins, and rose from the dead. Right now, I want to repent of my sins, and I want to trust you as my personal Lord and savior. Come into my life, Lord Jesus. And Lord, for those of us who know you, for those of us who have turned from our sin and turned to you, Lord, we know, and we're reminded of daily by the enemy, the accuser of the brethren, who we are right now, who we've been in our past, nervous about where we're going in the future that we might sin again. Lord, remind us that because of the cross, we have been cleansed from all of our sin. Lord,

do a work in us today as we prepare, in Jesus' name, amen.